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Editorial

The Quest for Becoming: Revisiting Freire's Humanism

Education is an important dimension in our lives. Changes in socio-political contexts, shifts in educational philosophies and ideologies have led to several transformations in what constitutes the essence and connotation of education today. One significant trend that characterises today's educational philosophies is a growing challenge to the idea of 'education as a public good'. What is gaining credibility, however, is a rather reductionist reconstruction of the purpose of education. In this new reconstruction, university becomes a 'transactory' space, knowledge and by extension, education a commodity (Marx, 1974). Moreover, in the current socio-political milieu, being educated is often substituted with being equipped with a set of skills – skills, that often challenge the essence of building a holistic individual who is critical, rational and responsive towards his/her community. It is in this context, with a certain sense of urgent necessity, I find it necessary to rethink what we had aspired for and where we have failed in the context of education in the current times.

In its myriad forms, education was perhaps understood as a process of making the individual human. Freire's humanisation spoke of the ontological necessity of aspiring to be a human (1972), the need to understand our historicities, not in an isolated context or by solely prioritising the intellect but through actions that hold a sincere promise to change the world. Freire's educational philosophy insisted that as humans, we can create, imagine, reflect on the proximate and distant past, rethink newer possibilities of the future, and be immersed in a constant quest to understand, question and change practices that oppress. Inspired by phenomenology, existentialism, and Marx, he had stressed on the importance of the dialectical relations between thought and material reality as an indispensable aspect of educational philosophy (Freire, 1972), which, if followed would have created positive, effective and sustainable structural changes in the education scenario of today.

What we notice in current times, in contrast, is a despicable apathy towards reflection. Reflection is an essential aspect of creating a critical praxis of education (Mayo, 2004; Roberts, 2000) which is the need of the hour. Reflection, as a human practice is borne out of curiosity and is sustained by a will to transform. In contrast to an ascetic meditation in an isolated world, the reflective individual becomes a responsible social being, engaging with the society in meaningful ways. In the face of the unpredictable future, reflection provides the anchor to understand, identify and critique the rigidities in the structures of educational praxis. Specifically in the context of education, the structural inequalities have resisted opening up spaces of learning for everyone. Providing education for all, creating a pedagogy that facilitates critical thinking and political consciousness, nurturing centres of higher learning as democratic spaces are issues that we are still grappling with.

Our educational philosophies, we had perhaps hoped would reflect the interweaved relations between a curriculum that engages with questions pertaining to metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, political philosophy and a pedagogy that facilitates the same. Liberation, as Freire would argue, is derived when we can free ourselves from the entanglement of servitudinal conformance and the oppressive cycles of social reproduction. Maviglia notes that “Paulo Freire was always an advocate of the idea that pedagogy cannot avoid the struggle to change the world through development of rigorous forms of analysis. Critical pedagogy is not solely interested in social change. It is also dedicated to cultivating the development of critical awareness among all members of the society” (Maviglia, 2015, p. 122). Questioning as a pedagogic method is familiar to and celebrated in both the eastern and the western philosophical world – stifling it is in direct antagonism to the spirit of reflection. In our modern times, in classrooms and campuses, we are suppressing the spirit of curiosity and questioning. We need to remember, for our education to liberate us, we need to understand, reflect and question. If we do not question, we do not evolve.

One might note the improvements that we are making. In the context of India, for example, the improved literacy rates show a positive trend (Census of India, 2011). However, reports of closure of humanities and social sciences departments, continued

discrimination on issues of caste, class and gender, commodification of knowledge, silencing of contrarian narratives and labeling 'questioning' as a disruptive action brings about a sense of concern for the future of education. Questions of access, equity and quality have been central in studies on education policies, and any observation of inequity, prejudice and discrimination - a matter of concern for scholars, policy makers, students and other stakeholders. However, we still have a long way to go.

Tattva Journal of Philosophy, published by Christ University aims to share critical studies and in-depth reflections and analyses of concerns of human life, in order to further the directions and transformations human society needs to evolve into. This issue bring forth research-based reports, articles and commentaries to provide a glimpse into a few of the important issues that require urgent, active involvement of educators, from analysing policies and ideologies of educational praxis to revisiting the commitments of higher centers of learning.

Savita Suresh's article, **Learning in College: Beyond the Classroom**, argues how classroom and formal instructional spaces are one of the many ways in which students learn in colleges. Specifically focusing on hostel spaces and student mobilisations, she urges the readers to rethink the binaries of formality and informality in teaching and learning. Furthermore, she posits that informal learning spaces could be seen as empowering and examines the role of these spaces in challenging hegemonic practices within college campuses.

In a commentary, **Role of Philosophy of Education in India**, Kiran Srivastava traces the evolution of the varied perspectives of educational philosophy in India and discusses the philosophical perspectives of Sri Aurobindo, Rabindranath Tagore, M. K. Gandhi concerning education. The present paper addresses the demands to develop an integrated framework for the educational institutions and teachers wherein they can help learners realise their inner potential, nurture the spirit of humanism, democratic spirit, secularism and scientific temper.

Anupama Mahajan's report, **Tracing Giftedness: An Exploration of Theories, Programmes and Emerging Dilemmas** problematises the conceptualisations of giftedness, their historical development in India and concerns with their current trajectories. She reflects on her field observations and her survey of literature wherein giftedness seems to be understood predominantly as a notion of scientific excellence whereby the subjectivities and myriad alternative conceptions of giftedness are compromised or considered at best, peripheral towards understanding the core issues of giftedness.

In the article, **Civil Society and State: A Historic Review**, authors Venugopal B. Menon and Chinnu Jolly Jerome provide us a historical review of the evolution of the concept of civil society. The article travels through the classical period, the period of Enlightenment in the 18th century, to the modern times and reveals a myriad range of ideologies that have contributed to the development of the concept. Additionally, the authors touch upon the Marxist and Gramscian discourses to demonstrate the transformations of the connotation of the concept, its relationship with the notions of public governance, the ideas of statehood and accountable citizenship. The article, while predominantly focusses on the importance of civil society in all forms of governance, in conclusion, brings forth an important discourse concerning the need to reclaim the responsibilities and active engagement of the civil society for the education context in India.

In our interview, Rajan Gurukkal, a renowned historian and social scientist mentions quite a few important issues regarding quality in higher education. He elaborates on the relationship between economy, state and individual and how they operate in the context of education in India. Using a Marxian analytical framework, he explains the impact of capitalistic globalisation coupled with the absence of an informed governmental regulation challenges the framework of liberal, critical education that we had aspired for.

We invite our readers to read, examine and deliberate!

Rolla Das
Issue Editor

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